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splendid visions of the rhapsodist; but for the actual robust work of the world, and for the advancement of high purposes which are not to end in dreams or resolutions but in action, the one appointed way is to go down among men and work. This way lies open in the practice of the law. It cannot be said to be free from perplexities. The practitioner will not find himself in a plain way in which the fool cannot err. But he will find himself in the midst of abundant opportunities for service to mankind, will see before him ideals among the highest which our minds can reach, and will have the encouragement of examples which are not behind the farthest mark that human nature has touched in its approach to justice.

JOSEPH B. WARNER.

BOSTON, MASS.

## DISCUSSIONS.

### “ASPECTS OF THE SOCIAL PROBLEM:” A REPLY.

THOUGH I am unable to admit the faults laid to my charge by Mr. Webb, I should like to say a few words to the readers of this JOURNAL as an acknowledgment of his attempt to find a platform for discussion. We are speaking to an audience which includes those, in many countries, who care most for progress, and on the highest grounds. I should wish, if I can be granted space, to put before them the reasons for the method of argument which I adopt, and the nature of the difficulties found in coming to an understanding; difficulties for which I cannot blame myself, excepting as regards deficient power to carry out my method adequately.

1. This discussion began with Mr. Ball's criticism of the book “Aspects of the Social Problem,” of which I was editor and partly author. I think that any reader, fresh from the study of the charges made against that work in this JOURNAL, will be a good deal surprised if he turns to the book itself. The principal passage of comment upon Socialism, which occupies by no means a large portion of the book, is on pp. 305-6. I had almost asked the editor to let me reprint it at length, but, on reflection, I can hardly expect to fill the pages of this JOURNAL with extracts from my own works. The whole passage simply *is* a very careful discrimination between differ-

ent possible senses of the term Socialism. It is carefully explained that though some Socialists, for whose views chapter and verse are given, have committed themselves to consequences which I deplore, what I really dread is not an avowed aim, but a process of intellectual drifting. Except as regards the writers actually quoted, the whole passage is explicitly hypothetical, and a clear disavowal, which I am glad to have drawn out, at once disarms it. Let me explain again. I point out a danger, and illustrate it from facts that have occurred, and views that are in black and white. I say *if* Socialism means this, then it is ruinous. I endeavored both there and wherever I have touched these questions to point out how closely, for a time, the healthy and morbid developments may appear to coincide, and to instigate my readers to the most serious reflection upon the problem of distinguishing them. My own position is not one which any careful thinker could call Individualist. The opposition to the ideas of Herbert Spencer, and of Mill in some of his moods, which I share with the Socialists, has therefore imposed on me the task of discrimination between Socialism and the main stream of social theory due to the great thinkers of the world. The acceptance by my critics of the rule of the game, that every one must be a Socialist or an Individualist, which I absolutely reject (in agreement, I am glad to see, with Mr. Gonner), is one primary difficulty in coming to an understanding, and perhaps the chief one.

2. But it is said that I scarcely recognize the existence of an evolution in Socialism, and that I am mistaken as to its course. The second part of this charge disposes of the first, and it will be enough to deal with the second. My view is briefly this: Socialism has a core of ideas in common with the great political and social philosophy of the world, and adds to these a number of misapprehensions and extravagances which are all its own. The tendency of evolution is to purge away the extravagances which belong to the operation of powerful ideas upon a democracy to which they are new, and to leave the core of sound social theory and practice, modified, no doubt, by the conditions of a more widely distributed capacity and a more self-conscious society. Now to ask whether the resultant social theory will be called Socialism is a merely verbal question, unless we can agree what Socialism is. To say that it is in evolution is no answer; evolution may be leading up to transformation or to suppression. At present there is nothing to show that, in proportion as Socialism is purified of misapprehen-

sions, dogmatic Collectivism will not be abandoned. If this goes, then the retention of the name Socialism is a matter of indifference. It is not enough to say that Socialism is in evolution. You must show where the Socialism is, which, being in evolution, is not returning towards the main stream of social theory and practice. Let the reader carefully note the poverty of Mr. Webb's list of references. Except in his own work on "Trades Unions" there is really nothing that points to the phase required. The Fabian essays are distinctly on the old-fashioned lines, and Mr. Gonner's work no less distinctly points to the dropping of doctrinaire Collectivism. It is too soon to judge of the real nature of the Fabian Society's new policy, and one cannot be expected to draw conclusions from the unpublished work, to which reference is made. But why should I desire to make out that a large band of clever men are hopelessly opposed to the ideas which I have at heart? I can only hope and trust that what is promised may be verified, and that a literature may be produced by English Socialism really worthy of our century and of our ethical stand-point. When such a literature shall appear, I pledge myself to hail it as the dawn of a new day. That it now exists, no one has, I think, asserted.

3. I do not agree—perhaps I am incurable—with Mr. Webb's prescriptions for the method of controversy, if I am right in understanding them to recommend dealing with generalities,—that is to say, arguing about fundamental assumptions in general form. My reason is twofold; in the first place, the habit of special pleading is now so widely spread by popular controversy that the generalities put forward as the fundamentals of a given argument are merely chosen for their plausibility, and give no clue to the nerve of the argument itself. If you attack them, the plausible sense is appealed to; but in arguing from them they are interpreted as the reasoner chooses. The social question has suffered too much from generalities, and a closer analysis is needed.

And, secondly, the modern thinker is aware that no principle is understood till it is applied; while, as it comes to be applied, it ceases to be an "assumption" (which really in Mr. Webb's hands becomes a question-begging term), and displays its real meaning, and its truth or falsehood; its capacity or incapacity, that is, to deal with the facts of experience. If our principles do not seem clear, but remain "tacit assumptions," then, first, we must admit defective powers of exposition; but, secondly, we must point out that the power and patience to see a principle in the only form in

which it really exists, viz., in the complication of its real context, is not too common, and there is no insult implied in doubting whether the champions of a new and exciting gospel have altogether acquired it. The same difficulty arises as to challenging the fundamental assumption of others. We say that, in the analysis of experience, we do far more than challenge assumptions; we exhibit in detail the limitations and confusions of the ideas under examination by the same process by which every hypothesis or proposition, it matters not whether assumption, axiom, principle, or induction, is made to show itself equal or unequal to the demands of experience. But though for science our method is the only one, for effective controversy it is undoubtedly too laborious; and we are not surprised that our circle of readers is limited.

It is more than time to conclude. My answer to the charge against me is, in brief, that there is not yet in this country any appreciable body of high-class socialistic literature, by which to test the view that, when purified and developed, Socialism will be Socialism still. My critics' references to the future for their evidence are too remarkable to escape notice. Nothing of all the practical changes to which Mr. Ball refers has any distinctive connection with Socialism. When the promised literature and the new policy are developed, it will be time to see, first, whether they are rational, and, secondly, whether they are socialistic. In the mean time, we claim that no principle is known except in its concrete development, and that the careful and persistent analysis of the developments is the only method by which principles can be established or refuted. And we are always ready for discussion, except when it seems unwelcome to those who invite us.

BERNARD BOSANQUET.

LONDON.

#### CONCLUDING NOTE.

I HAVE no desire to extend or magnify controversy. Readers of my article must have realized that I was attacking false prophets of Socialism as much as, or even more than, their critic. The difference between Mr. Bosanquet and myself is partly a difference of emphasis, partly a difference in method of interpretation. I admit that the signs of Socialism are not altogether on my side of the controversy: my wish is father, perhaps, to my idea of Socialism, and I can only hope that the future may prove to be on my side rather than on that of my critic. That is also Mr. Bosanquet's hope,